

A Word With You

SHAKESPEARE (now in his 401st year) has been proven to be or not to be many different things by many different scholars — an aristocrat, a commoner, an actor, another actor, another playwright, non-existent. So I shall add to the tempest and show that he was — why not? — a Georgist!

In "A Merchant of Venice," old Shylock understood the matter when he said, "You take my life when you do take the means whereby I live."

Cloten, in "Cymbeline," also knew the economics of monopoly when answering the Romans' demand for tribute: "Why should we pay tribute? If Caesar can hide the sun from us with a blanket, or put the moon in his pocket, we will pay him tribute for light: else, sir, no more tribute, pray you now."

In 1940, during the Battle of Britain, our hearts melted for the old country, and John of Gaunt's speech in "Richard II" was tripped off many a tongue: "...this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England..." If we read on, we'd find that

"...this dear, dear land...
Is now leased out (I die pronouncing it),
Like to a tenement, or pelting farm:
England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious
siege
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with
shame,
With inky blots, and rotten parchment
bonds;
That England, that was wont to conquer
others,
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself."

Shakespeare well understood the value of the individual human being and placed that above all class distinctions. In "All's Well That Ends Well," the King muses:

"... Strange is it that our bloods,
Of color, weight, and heat, poured all
together,
Would quite confound distinction, yet
stand off
In differences so mighty."

In the tragedies, too, Shakespeare seems to be telling us that if only people were left free to express their natural selves, all would be as you like it.

Romeo's and Juliet's natural love for each other was doomed by the unnatural hatred of their families. Cordelia's simple affection for her father, King Lear, was the only sound note in a maelstrom of rage, lust and ambition. Hamlet was right to doubt and hesitate, according to his nature; the ghost of his father was wrong to press him to vengeance, which ended in a total shambles. Macbeth refused to let nature take its course; Othello was ruined by Iago's distorted envy.

Of course, if all these outrageous things didn't happen, we might not have a Shakespeare; and if we didn't have land monopoly, there wouldn't have been a Henry George. There then; how then, what then? I love and honor them. They have served their turn, we must serve ours.

— Robert Clancy

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The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 69th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021, supports the following principle:

The community, by its presence and activity, gives rental value to land, therefore the rent of land belongs to the community and not to the landowners. Labor and capital, by their combined efforts, produce the goods of the community — known as wealth. This wealth belongs to the producers. Justice requires that the government, representing the community, collect the rent of land for community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

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